



# SS Savannah: the first steamship to cross the Atlantic Ocean in May 22, 1819

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## General Note



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S.S. *Savannah*, the elegant ship was the first steam-powered vessel to cross and recross the Atlantic Ocean, returning without an engine bolt or screw out of place. It sailed from the harbor on May 22, 1819 and reached Liverpool 27 days later. The ship's daring commander, Captain Moses Rogers, had chosen Stephen Vail to build the *Savannah's* engine. The ship ran under steam for less than 90 hours during the 29-day trip. The 3-masted ship carried 75 tons of coal and 25 cords of wood; all of this fuel was consumed during the crossing. The elegant ship excited the interest of President James Monroe as well as the kings of Sweden and Norway, and even the czar of Russia. The ship was too small to carry much fuel and so the steam engine was to be used only in calm weather. The ship had sixteen staterooms with two berths in each. There was a distinct difference between the men's rooms and those to be used by women. There were three furnished salons richly decorated with imported carpets, curtains, and hangings along with mirrors used for decorative purposes. The rooms were said to resemble those on a luxury yacht and did not resemble the normal fare for a steam packet. In spite of its historic voyage, the SS *Savannah* was not financially successful, mostly because the public was not ready to trust that means of transportation on the open sea. The SS *Savannah* was converted back to a sailing ship shortly after its return from Europe, and later wrecked off Long Island in 1821. The 3-cent anniversary stamp of the SS *Savannah* was issued on May 22, 1944.